

Google fires four workers in apparent retaliation for their workplace activism

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27 November 2019

Google's parent corporation Alphabet, Inc. fired four employees on Monday in apparent retaliation for their involvement in various forms of political activism within the \$900 billion monopoly. The Silicon Valley company claimed the firings were the result of data security violations.

A memo obtained by Bloomberg entitled "Securing our data" was sent by representatives of Google's Security and Investigations Team to the entire company staff on Monday. It said, "today we've dismissed four employees for clear and repeated violations of our data security policies." Google representatives confirmed both the firings and the authenticity of the memo.

The Google corporate firing memo went on, "our thorough investigation found the individuals were involved in systematic searches for other employees' materials and work," and "inaccurate descriptions about Googlers' work, was subsequently shared externally." However, no specifics were offered as to how the internal searches violated company policies or what was inaccurate about the externally shared descriptions of Google work.

Although all the names of those dismissed by Google are unavailable at this time, Rebecca Rivers, a software engineer who was involved in internal protests against the company's work with the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), announced via Twitter on Monday, "I was just informed by @Google that I am being terminated."

A group called Tech Workers Coalition posted on Twitter that "Google fired the Thanksgiving Four for organizing at work" and calling on others in the tech community to offer them jobs and for Google employees to speak out against it saying, "This is meant to scare workers, don't let it."

Significantly, a rally of 200 Google staff people was

organized on Friday, November 22 to defend Rivers and fellow employee Laurence Berland who had been suspended by management for allegedly accessing as part of their political activities within the company internal information without authorization.

At the rally, both Rivers and Berland publicly stated they had objected to Google's collaboration with CBP—a branch of the state apparatus mobilized by the Trump administration to attack the rights of immigrants—and denied that they had unauthorized access to company documents.

At the rally Berland said, "If we can't speak up about these issues that concern us about our work, how can we ever hold ourselves and each other to the high standard that we need and the world deserves? Silence and secrecy are not the way for us to come together to solve problems."

As a result of the activism of Rivers and Berland, nearly 1,500 Google employees had signed a petition demanding that the company "publicly commit not to support CBP, ICE, or ORR with any infrastructure, funding, or engineering resources, directly or indirectly, until they stop engaging in human rights abuses."

The petition also likened Google's contracts with the Trump's Department of Homeland Security apparatus to "a shameful lineage" and "We have only to look to IBM's role working with the Nazis during the Holocaust to understand the role that technology can play in automating mass atrocity."

Rivers reported at the rally on Friday, that she had been questioned by the security team about her involvement in the anti-CBP petition. She said, "I'm proud of what I did. I believe everyone has the right to know what their work is used for."

It is notable that Google's memo—which reads as a threat to staff who might either be sympathetic to the

fired workers or who have been supporting their political activism—goes on to claim that the four employees were attempting to “intimidate Googlers” who “felt scared or unsafe” in their workplaces.

There has been growing opposition by Google employees across a series of issues in recent years against corporate policies and practices. In July 2018, protests by Google workers ended the company’s contract with a Pentagon artificial intelligence program called Project Maven. When 4,000 employees signed a petition demanded a company policy “stating that neither Google nor its contractors will ever build warfare technology.”



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